

Tiberius Gracchus

By Plutarch

(legendary, died 133 B.C.E.)

Translated by John Dryden

Having completed the first two narratives, we now may proceed to take a view of misfortunes, not less remarkable, in the Roman couple, and with the lives of Agis and Cleomenes, compare these of Tiberius and Caius. They were the sons of Tiberius Gracchus, who though he had been once censor, twice consul, and twice had triumphed, yet was more renowned and esteemed for his virtue than his honours. Upon this account, after the death of Scipio who overthrew Hannibal, he was thought worthy to match with his daughter Cornelia, though there had been no friendship or familiarity between Scipio and him, but rather the contrary. There is a story told that he once found in his bed-chamber a couple of snakes, and that the soothsayers, being consulted concerning

the prodigy, advised that he should neither kill them both nor let them both escape; adding, that if the male serpent was killed, Tiberius should die, and if the female, Cornelia. And that therefore Tiberius, who extremely loved his wife, and thought, besides, that it was much more his part, who was an old man, to die, than it was hers, who as yet was but a young woman, killed the male serpent, and let the female escape; and soon after himself died, leaving behind him twelve children borne to him by Cornelia.

Cornelia, taking upon herself all the care of the household and the education of her children, approved herself so discreet a matron, so affectionate a mother, and so constant and noble-spirited a widow, that Tiberius seemed to all men to have done nothing unreasonable in choosing to die for such a woman; who, when King Ptolemy himself proffered her his crown, and would have married her, refused it, and chose rather to live a widow. In this state she continued, and lost all her children, except one daughter, who was married to Scipio the younger, and two sons, Tiberius and Caius, whose lives we are now writing.

These she brought up with such care, that though they were without

dispute in natural endowments and dispositions the first among the Romans of their time, yet they seemed to owe their virtues even more to their education than to their birth. And as, in the statues and pictures made of Castor and Pollux, though the brothers resemble one another, yet there is a difference to be perceived in their countenances, between the one, who delighted in the cestus, and the other, that was famous in the course, so between these two noble youths, though there was a strong general likeness in their common love of fortitude and temperance, in their liberality, their eloquence, and their greatness of mind, yet in their actions and administrations of public affairs, a considerable variation showed itself. It will not be amiss before we proceed to mark the difference between them.

Tiberius, in the form and expression of his countenance, and in his gesture and motion, was gentle and composed; but Caius, earnest and vehement. And so in their public speeches to the people, the one spoke in a quiet, orderly manner, standing throughout on the same spot; the other would walk about on the hustings, and in the heat of his orations pull his gown off his shoulders, and was the first of all the Romans that used such gestures; as Cleon is said to have been the first orator among the Athenians that pulled off his cloak and

smote his thigh, when addressing the people. Caius's oratory was impetuous and passionate, making everything tell to the utmost, whereas Tiberius was gentle and persuasive, awakening emotions of pity. His diction was pure and carefully correct, while that of Caius was vehement and rich. So likewise in their way of living and at their tables, Tiberius was frugal and plain, Caius, compared with other men, temperate and even austere, but contrasting with his brother in a fondness for new fashions and rarities, as appears in Drusus's charge against him, that he had bought some silver dolphins, to the value of twelve hundred and fifty drachmas for every pound weight.

The same difference that appeared in their diction was observable also in their tempers. The one was mild and reasonable, the other rough and passionate, and to that degree, that often, in the midst of speaking, he was so hurried away by his passion against his judgment, that his voice lost its tone, and he began to pass into mere abusive talking, spoiling his whole speech. As a remedy to this excess, he made use of an ingenious servant of his, one Licinius, who stood constantly behind him with a sort of pitch-pipe, or instrument to regulate the voice by, and whenever he perceived his master's tone alter and break with anger, he struck a soft note with his pipe, on hearing which

Caius immediately checked the vehemence of his passion, and his voice, grew quieter, and allowed himself to be recalled to temper. Such are the differences between the two brothers; but their valour in war against their country's enemies, their justice in the government of its subjects, their care and industry in office, and their self-command in all that regarded their pleasures, were equally remarkable in both.

Tiberius was the elder by nine years; owing to which their actions as public men were divided by the difference of the times in which those of the one and those of the other were performed. And one of the principal causes of the failure of their enterprises was this interval between their careers, and the want of combination of their efforts. The power they would have exercised, had they flourished both together, could scarcely have failed to overcome all resistance. We must therefore give an account of each of them singly, and first of the eldest.

Tiberius, immediately on his attaining manhood, had such a reputation that he was admitted into the college of the augurs, and that in consideration more of his early virtue than of his noble birth. This appeared by what Appius Claudius did, who, though he had been consul and censor,

and was now the head of the Roman senate, and had the highest sense of his own place and merit, at a public feast of the augurs, addressed himself openly to Tiberius, and with great expressions of kindness, offered him his daughter in marriage. And when Tiberius gladly accepted, and the agreement had thus been completed, Appius returning home, no sooner had reached his door, but he called to his wife and cried out in a loud voice, "O Antistia, I have contracted our daughter Claudia to a husband." She, being amazed, answered, "But why so suddenly, or what means this haste? Unless you have provided Tiberius Gracchus for her husband." I am not ignorant that some apply this story to Tiberius, the father of the Gracchi, and Scipio Africanus; but most relate it as we have done. And Polybius writes, that after the death of Scipio Africanus, the nearest relations of Cornelia, preferring Tiberius to all other competitors, gave her to him in marriage, not having been engaged or promised to any one by her father.

This young Tiberius, accordingly, serving in Africa under the younger Scipio, who had married his sister, and living there under the same tent with him, soon learned to estimate the noble spirit of his commander, which was so fit to inspire strong feelings of emulation in virtue and desire to prove merit in action, and in a short time he excelled

all the young men of the army in obedience and courage; and he was the first that mounted the enemy's wall, as Fannius says, who writes that he himself climbed up with him, and was partaker in the achievement. He was regarded, while he continued with the army, with great affection; and left behind him on his departure a strong desire for his return.

After that expedition, being chosen paymaster, it was his fortune to serve in the war against the Numantines, under the command of Caius Mancinus, the consul, a person of no bad character, but the most unfortunate of all the Roman generals. Notwithstanding, amidst the greatest misfortunes, and in the most unsuccessful enterprises, not only the discretion and valour of Tiberius, but also, which was still more to be admired, the great respect and honour which he showed for his general, were most eminently remarkable; though the general himself, when reduced in straits, forgot his own dignity and office. For being beaten in various great battles, he endeavoured to dislodge by night and leave his camp; which the Numantines perceiving, immediately possessed themselves of his camp, and pursuing that part of the forces which was in flight, slew those that were in the rear, hedged the whole army in on every side, and forced them into difficult ground, whence there could be no possibility of an escape. Mancinus, despairing to make his way

through by force, sent a messenger to desire a truce and conditions of peace. But they refused to give their confidence to any one except Tiberius, and required that he should be sent to treat with them. This was not only in regard to the young man's own character, for he had a great reputation amongst the soldiers, but also in remembrance of his father Tiberius, who, in his command against the Spaniards, had reduced great numbers of them to subjection, but granted a peace to the Numantines, and prevailed upon the Romans to keep it punctually and inviolably.

Tiberius was accordingly despatched to the enemy, whom he persuaded to accept of several conditions, and he himself complied with others; and by this means, it is beyond a question, that he saved twenty thousand of the Roman citizens, besides attendants and camp followers. However, the Numantines retained possession of all the property they had found and plundered in the encampment; and amongst other things were Tiberius's books of accounts, containing the whole transactions of his quaestorship, which he was extremely anxious to recover. And therefore, when the army were already upon their march, he returned to Numantia, accompanied with only three or four of his friends; and making his application to the officers of the Numantines, he entreated that they would return

him his books, lest his enemies should have it in their power to reproach him with not being able to give an account of the moneys intrusted to him. The Numantines joyfully embraced this opportunity of obliging him, and invited him into the city; as he stood hesitating, they came up and took him by the hands, and begged that he would no longer look upon them as enemies, but believe them to be his friends, and treat them as such. Tiberius thought it well to consent, desirous as he was to have his books returned, and was afraid lest he should disoblige them by showing any distrust. As soon as he entered into the city, they first offered him food, and made every kind of entreaty that he would sit down and eat something in their company. Afterwards they returned his books, and gave him the liberty to take whatever he wished for in the remaining spoils. He, on the other hand, would accept of nothing but some frankincense, which he used in his public sacrifices, and bidding them farewell with every expression of kindness, departed.

When he returned to Rome, he found the whole transaction censured and reproached, as a proceeding that was base and scandalous to the Romans. But the relations and friends of the soldiers, forming a large body among the people, came flocking to Tiberius, whom they acknowledged as the preserver of so many citizens, imputing to the general all

the miscarriages which had happened. Those who cried out against what had been done, urged for imitation the example of their ancestors, who stripped and handed over to the Samnites not only the generals who had consented to the terms of release, but also all the quaestors, for example, and tribunes, who had in any way implicated themselves in the agreement, laying the guilt of perjury and breach of conditions on their heads. But, in this all the populace, showing an extraordinary kindness and affection for Tiberius, indeed voted that the consul should be stripped and put in irons, and so delivered to the Numantines; but, for the sake of Tiberius, spared all the other officers. It may be probable, also, that Scipio, who at that time was the greatest and most powerful man among the Romans, contributed to save him, though indeed he was also censured for not protecting Mancinus too, and that he did not exert himself to maintain the observance of the articles of peace which had been agreed upon by his kinsman and friend Tiberius. But it may be presumed that the difference between them was for the most part due to ambitious feelings, and to the friends and reasoners who urged on Tiberius, and, as it was, it never amounted to anything that might not have been remedied, or that was really bad. Nor can I think that Tiberius would ever have met with his misfortunes, if Scipio had been concerned in dealing with his measures; but he was

away fighting at Numantia when Tiberius, upon the following occasion, first came forward as a legislator.

Of the land which the Romans gained by conquest from their neighbours, part they sold publicly, and turned the remainder into common; this common land they assigned to such of the citizens as were poor and indigent, for which they were to pay only a small acknowledgment into the public treasury. But when the wealthy men began to offer larger rents, and drive the poorer people out, it was enacted by law that no person whatever should enjoy more than five hundred acres of ground. This act for some time checked the avarice of the richer, and was of great assistance to the poorer people, who retained under it their respective proportions of ground, as they had been formerly rented by them. Afterwards the rich men of the neighbourhood contrived to get these lands again into their possession, under other people's names, and at last would not stick to claim most of them publicly in their own. The poor, who were thus deprived of their farms, were no longer either ready, as they had formerly been, to serve in war or careful in the education of their children; insomuch that in a short time there were comparatively few freemen remaining in all Italy, which swarmed with workhouses full of foreign-born slaves. These the

rich men employed in cultivating their ground of which they dispossessed the citizens. Caius Laelius, the intimate friend of Scipio, undertook to reform this abuse; but meeting with opposition from men of authority, and fearing a disturbance, he soon desisted, and received the name of the Wise or the Prudent, both which meanings belong to the Latin word Sapiens.

But Tiberius, being elected tribune of the people, entered upon that design without delay, at the instigation, as is most commonly stated, of Diophanes, the rhetorician, and Blossius, the philosopher. Diophanes was a refugee from Mitylene, the other was an Italian, of the city of Cuma, and was educated there under Antipater of Tarsus, who afterwards did him the honour to dedicate some of his philosophical lectures to him.

Some have also charged Cornelia, the mother of Tiberius, with contributing towards it, because she frequently upbraided her sons, that the Romans as yet rather called her the daughter of Scipio, than the mother of the Gracchi. Others again say that Spurius Postumius was the chief occasion. He was a man of the same age with Tiberius, and his rival for reputation as a public speaker; and when Tiberius, at his return

from the campaign, found him to have got far beyond him in fame and influence, and to be much looked up to, he thought to outdo him, by attempting a popular enterprise of this difficulty and of such great consequence. But his brother Caius has left it us in writing, that when Tiberius went through Tuscany to Numantia, and found the country almost depopulated, there being hardly any free husbandmen or shepherds, but for the most part only barbarian, imported slaves, he then first conceived the course of policy which in the sequel proved so fatal to his family. Though it is also most certain that the people themselves chiefly excited his zeal and determination in the prosecution of it, by setting up writings upon the porches, walls, and monuments, calling upon him to reinstate the poor citizens in their former possessions.

However, he did not draw up his law without the advice and assistance of those citizens that were then most eminent for their virtue and authority; amongst whom were Crassus, the high-priest, Mucius Scaevola, the lawyer, who at that time was consul, and Claudius Appius, his father-in-law. Never did any law appear more moderate and gentle, especially being enacted against such great oppression and avarice. For they who ought to have been severely punished for transgressing the former laws, and should at least have lost all their titles to

such lands which they had unjustly usurped, were notwithstanding to receive a price for quitting their unlawful claims, and giving up their lands to those fit owners who stood in need of help. But though this reformation was managed with so much tenderness that, all the former transactions being passed over, the people were only thankful to prevent abuses of the like nature for the future, yet, on the other hand, the moneyed men, and those of great estates, were exasperated, through their covetous feelings against the law itself, and against the lawgiver, through anger and party-spirit. They therefore endeavoured to seduce the people, declaring that Tiberius was designing a general redivision of lands, to overthrow the government, and cut all things into confusion.

But they had no success. For Tiberius, maintaining an honourable and just cause, and possessed of eloquence sufficient to have made a less creditable action appear plausible, was no safe or easy antagonist, when, with the people crowding around the hustings, he took his place, and spoke in behalf of the poor. "The savage beasts," said he, "in Italy, have their particular dens, they have their places of repose and refuge; but the men who bear arms, and expose their lives for the safety of their country, enjoy in the meantime nothing more in

it but the air and light and, having no houses or settlements of their own, are constrained to wander from place to place with their wives and children." He told them that the commanders were guilty of a ridiculous error, when, at the head of their armies, they exhorted the common soldiers to fight for their sepulchres and altars; when not any amongst so many Romans is possessed of either altar or monument, neither have they any houses of their own, or hearths of their ancestors to defend. They fought indeed and were slain, but it was to maintain the luxury and the wealth of other men. They were styled the masters of the world, but in the meantime had not one foot of ground which they could call their own. An harangue of this nature, spoken to an enthusiastic and sympathizing audience, by a person of commanding spirit and genuine feelings, no adversaries at that time were competent to oppose. Forbearing, therefore, all discussion and debate, they addressed themselves to Marcus Octavius, his fellow-tribune, who being a young man of a steady, orderly character, and an intimate friend of Tiberius, upon this account declined at first the task of opposing him; but at length, over-persuaded with the repeated importunities of numerous considerable persons, he was prevailed upon to do so, and hindered the passing of the law; it being the rule that any tribune has a power to hinder an act, and that all the rest can effect nothing, if only one of them dissents.

Tiberius, irritated at these proceedings, presently laid aside this milder bill, but at the same time preferred another; which, as it was more grateful to the common people, so it was much more severe against the wrongdoers, commanding them to make an immediate surrender of all lands which, contrary to former laws, had come into their possession. Hence there arose daily contentions between him and Octavius in their orations. However, though they expressed themselves with the utmost heat and determination, they yet were never known to descend to any personal reproaches, or in their passion to let slip any indecent expressions, so as to derogate from one another.

For not alone-

"In revellings and Bacchic play," but also in contentions and political animosities, a noble nature and a temperate education stay and compose the mind. Observing that Octavius himself was an offender against this law, and detained a great quantity of ground from the commonalty, Tiberius desired him to forbear opposing him any further, and proffered, for the public good, though he himself had but an indifferent estate, to pay a price for Octavius's share at his own cost and charges. But upon the refusal of this proffer by Octavius, he then interposed an

edict, prohibiting all magistrates to exercise their respective functions, till such time as the law was either ratified or rejected by public votes. He further sealed up the gates of Saturn's temple, so that the treasurers could neither take any money out from thence, nor put any in. He threatened to impose a severe fine upon those of the praetors who presumed to disobey his commands, insomuch that all the officers, for fear of this penalty, intermitted the exercise of their several jurisdictions. Upon this the rich proprietors put themselves into mourning, and went up and down melancholy and dejected; they entered also into a conspiracy against Tiberius, and procured men to murder him; so that he also, with all men's knowledge, whenever he went abroad, took with him a sword-staff, such as robbers use, called in Latin a dolo.

When the day appointed was come, and the people summoned to give their votes, the rich men seized upon the voting urns and carried them away by force; thus all things were in confusion. But when Tiberius's party appeared strong enough to oppose the contrary faction, and drew together in a body, with the resolution to do so, Manlius and Fulvius, two of the consular quality, threw themselves before Tiberius, took him by the hand, and, with tears in their eyes, begged of him to desist.

Tiberius, considering the mischiefs that were all but now occurring, and having a great respect for two such eminent persons, demanded of them what they would advise him to do. They acknowledged themselves unfit to advise in a matter of so great importance, but earnestly entreated him to leave it to the determination of the senate. But when the senate assembled, and could not bring the business to any result, through the prevalence of the rich faction, he then was driven to a course neither legal nor fair, and proposed to deprive Octavius of his tribuneship, it being impossible for him in any other way to get the law brought to the vote. At first he addressed him publicly, with entreaties couched in the kindest terms, and taking him by his hands, besought him, that now, in the presence of all the people, he would take this opportunity to oblige them, in granting only that request which was in itself so just and reasonable, being but a small recompense in regard of those many dangers and hardships which they had undergone for the public safety. Octavius, however, would by no means be persuaded to compliance; upon which Tiberius declared openly, that, seeing they two were united in the same office, and of equal authority, it would be a difficult matter to compose their difference on so weighty a matter without a civil war; and that the only remedy which he knew must be the deposing one of them from their office.

He desired, therefore, that Octavius would summon the people to pass their verdict upon him first, averring that he would willingly relinquish his authority if the citizens desired it. Octavius refused; and Tiberius then said he would himself put to the people the question of Octavius's deposition, if upon mature deliberation he did not alter his mind and after this declaration he adjourned the assembly till the next day.

When the people were met together again, Tiberius placed himself in the rostra, and endeavoured a second time to persuade Octavius. But all being to no purpose, he referred the whole matter to the people, calling on them to vote at once, whether Octavius should be deposed or not; and when seventeen of the thirty-five tribes had already voted against him, and there wanted only the votes of one tribe more for his final deprivation, Tiberius put a short stop to the proceedings, and once more renewed his importunities; he embraced and kissed him before all the assembly, begging with all the earnestness imaginable, that he would neither suffer himself to incur the dishonour, nor him to be reputed the author and promoter of so odious a measure. Octavius, we are told, did seem a little softened and moved with these entreaties; his eyes filled with tears, and he continued silent for a considerable

time. But presently looking towards the rich men and proprietors of estates, who stood gathered in a body together, partly for shame, and partly for fear of disgracing himself with them, he boldly bade Tiberius use any severity he pleased. The law for his deprivation being thus voted, Tiberius ordered one of his servants, whom he had made a freeman, to remove Octavius from the rostra, employing his own domestic freed servants in the stead of the public officers. And it made the action seem all the sadder, that Octavius was dragged out in such an ignominious manner. The people immediately assaulted him, whilst the rich men ran in to his assistance. Octavius, with some difficulty, was snatched away and safely conveyed out of the crowd; though a trusty servant of his, who had placed himself in front of his master that he might assist his escape, in keeping off the multitude, had his eyes struck out, much to the displeasure of Tiberius, who ran with all haste, when he perceived the disturbance, to appease the rioters.

This being done, the law concerning the lands was ratified and confirmed, and three commissioners were appointed, to make a survey of the grounds, and see the same equally divided. These were Tiberius himself, Claudius Appius, his father-in-law and his brother, Caius Gracchus, who at

this time was not at Rome, but in the army under the command of Scipio Africanus before Numantia. These things were transacted by Tiberius without any disturbance, none daring to offer any resistance to him; besides which, he gave the appointment as tribune in Octavius's place, not to any person of distinction, but to a certain Mucius, one of his own clients. The great men of the city were therefore utterly offended, and, fearing lest he grew yet more popular, they took all opportunities of affronting him publicly in the senate-house. For when he requested, as was usual, to have a tent provided at the public charge for his use, while dividing the lands, though it was a favour commonly granted to persons employed in business of much less importance, it was peremptorily refused to him; and the allowance made him for his daily expenses was fixed to nine obols only. The chief promoter of these affronts was Publius Nasica, who openly abandoned himself to his feelings of hatred against Tiberius, being a large holder of the public lands, and not a little resenting now to be turned out of them by force. The people, on the other hand, were still more and more excited, insomuch that a little after this, it happening that one of Tiberius's friends died suddenly, and his body being marked with malignant-looking spots, they ran, in a tumultuous manner, to his funeral, crying aloud that the man was poisoned. They took the

bier upon their shoulders, and stood over it, while it was placed on the pile, and really seemed to have fair grounds for their suspicion of foul play. For the body burst open, and such a quantity of corrupt humours issued out, that the funeral fire was extinguished, and when it was again kindled, the wood still would not burn; insomuch that they were constrained to carry the corpse to another place, where with much difficulty it took fire. Besides this, Tiberius, that he might incense the people yet more, put himself into mourning, brought his children amongst the crowd, and entreated the people to provide for them and their mother, as if he now despaired of his own security.

About this time king Attalus, surnamed Philometor, died, and Eudemus, a Pergamenian, brought his last will to Rome, by which he had made the Roman people his heirs. Tiberius, to please the people, immediately proposed making a law, that all the money which Attalus left should be distributed amongst such poor citizens as were to be sharers of the public lands, for the better enabling them to proceed in stocking and cultivating their ground; and as for the cities that were in the territories of Attalus, he declared that the disposal of them did not at all belong to the senate, but to the people, and that he himself would ask their pleasure herein. By this he offended the senate more

than ever he had done before, and Pompeius stood up and acquainted them that he was the next neighbour to Tiberius, and so had the opportunity of knowing that Eudemus, the Pergamenian, had presented Tiberius with a royal diadem and a purple robe, as before long he was to be king of Rome. Quintus Metellus also upbraided him, saying, that when his father was censor, the Romans, whenever he happened to be going home from a supper, used to put out all their lights, lest they should be seen to have indulged themselves in feasting and drinking at unseasonable hours, whereas now the most indigent and audacious of the people were found with their torches at night, following Tiberius home. Titus Annius, a man of no great repute for either justice or temperance, but famous for his skill in putting and answering questions, challenged Tiberius to the proof by wager, declaring him to have deposed a magistrate who by law was sacred and inviolable. Loud clamour ensued, and Tiberius, quitting the senate hastily, called together the people, and summoning Annius to appear, was proceeding to accuse him. But Annius, being no great speaker, nor of any repute compared to him, sheltered himself in his own particular art, and desired that he might propose one or two questions to Tiberius before he entered upon the chief argument. This liberty being granted, and silence proclaimed, Annius proposed his question. "If you," said he, "had a design to disgrace and defame

me, and I should apply myself to one of your colleagues for redress, and he should come forward to my assistance, would you for that reason fall into a passion, and depose him?" Tiberius, they say, was so much disconcerted at this question, that, though at other times his assurance as his readiness of speech was always remarkable, yet now he was silent and made no reply.

For the present he dismissed the assembly. But beginning to understand that the course he had taken with Octavius had created offence even among the populace as well as the nobility, because the dignity of the tribunes seemed to be violated, which had always continued till that day sacred and honourable, he made a speech to the people in justification of himself; out of which it may not be improper to collect some particulars, to give an impression of his force and persuasiveness in speaking. "A tribune," he said, "of the people, is sacred indeed, and ought to be inviolable, because in a manner consecrated to be the guardian and protector of them; but if he degenerate so far as to oppress the people, abridge their powers, and take away their liberty of voting, he stands deprived by his own act of honours and immunities, by the neglect of the duty for which the honour was bestowed upon him. Otherwise we should be under the obligation to let a tribune

do this pleasure, though he should proceed to destroy the capitol or set fire to the arsenal. He who should make these attempts would be a bad tribune. He who assails the power of the people is no longer a tribune at all. Is it not inconceivable that a tribune should have power to imprison a consul, and the people have no authority to degrade him when he uses that honour which he received from them, to their detriment? For the tribunes, as well as the consuls, hold office by the people's votes. The kingly government, which comprehends all sorts of authority in itself alone, is moreover elevated by the greatest and most religious solemnity imaginable into a condition of sanctity. But the citizens, notwithstanding this, deposed Tarquin, when he acted wrongfully; and for the crime of one single man, the ancient government under which Rome was built was abolished for ever. What is there in all Rome so sacred and venerable as the vestal virgins, to whose care alone the preservation of the eternal fire is committed? yet if one of these transgress she is buried alive; the sanctity which for the gods' sakes is allowed them, is forfeited when they offend against the gods. So likewise a tribune retains not his inviolability, which for the people's sake was accorded to him, when he offends against the people, and attacks the foundations of that authority from whence he derived his own. We esteem him to be legally chosen tribune who

is elected only by the majority of votes; and is not therefore the same person much more lawfully degraded when, by a general consent of them all, they agreed to depose him? Nothing is so sacred as religious offerings; yet the people were never prohibited to make use of them, but suffered to remove and carry them wherever they pleased; so likewise, as it were some sacred present, they have lawful power to transfer the tribuneship from one man's hands to another's. Nor can that authority be thought inviolable and irremovable which many of those who have held it, have of their own act surrendered and desired to be discharged from."

These were the principal heads of Tiberius's apology. But his friends, apprehending the dangers which seemed to threaten him, and the conspiracy that was gathering head against him, were of opinion that the safest way would be for him to petition that he might be continued tribune for the year ensuing. Upon this consideration he again endeavoured to secure the people's good-will with fresh laws, making the years of serving in the war fewer than formerly, granting liberty of appeal from the judges to the people, and joining to the senators, who were judges at that time, an equal number of citizens of the horsemen's degree, endeavouring as much as in him lay to lessen the power of

the senate, rather from passion and partisanship than from any rational regard to equity and the public good. And when it came to the question whether these laws should be passed, and they perceived that the opposite party were strongest, the people as yet being not got together in a full body, they began first of all to gain time by speeches in accusation of some of their fellow-magistrates and at length adjourned the assembly till the day following.

Tiberius then went down into the market-place amongst the people, and made his addresses to them humbly and with tears in his eyes; and told them he had just reason to suspect that his adversaries would attempt in the night-time to break open his house and murder him. This worked so strongly with the multitude, that several of them pitched tents round about his house, and kept guard all night for the security of his person. By break of day came one of the soothsayers, who prognosticate good or bad success by the pecking of fowls, and threw them something to eat. The soothsayer used his utmost endeavours to fright the fowls out of their coop; but none of them except one would venture out, which fluttered with his left wing, and stretched out its leg, and ran back again into the coop, without eating anything. This put Tiberius in mind of another ill-omen which had formerly happened to him. He

had a very costly headpiece, which he made use of when he engaged in any battle, and into this piece of armour two serpents crawled, laid eggs, and brought forth young ones. The remembrance of which made Tiberius more concerned now than otherwise he would have been. However, he went towards the capitol as soon as he understood that the people were assembled there; but before he got out of the house he stumbled upon the threshold with such violence, that he broke the nail of his great toe, insomuch that blood gushed out of his shoes. He was not gone very far before he saw two ravens fighting on the top of a house which stood on his left hand as he passed along; and though he was surrounded with a number of people, a stone struck from its place by one of the ravens, fell just at his foot. This even the boldest men about him felt as a check. But Blossius of Cuma, who was present, told him that it would be a shame and an ignominious thing for Tiberius, who was a son of Gracchus, the grandson of Scipio Africanus, and the protector of the Roman people to refuse, for fear of a silly bird, to answer when his countrymen called to him; and that his adversaries would represent it not as a mere matter for their ridicule, but would declaim about it to the people as the mark of a tyrannical temper, which felt a pride in taking liberties with the people. At the same time several messengers came also from his friends, to desire his

presence at the capitol, saying that all things went there according to expectation. And indeed Tiberius's first entrance there was in every way successful; as soon as ever he appeared, the people welcomed him with loud acclamations, and as he went up to his place, they repeated their expressions of joy, and gathered in a body around him, so that no one who was not well known to be his friend might approach. Mucius then began to put the business again to the vote; but nothing could be performed in the usual course and order, because of the disturbance caused by those who were on the outside of the crowd, where there was a struggle going on with those of the opposite party, who were pushing on and trying to force their way in and establish themselves among them.

Whilst things were in this confusion, Flavius Flaccus, a senator, standing in a place where he could be seen, but at such a distance from Tiberius that he could not make him hear, signified to him by motions of his hand, that he wished to impart something of consequence to him in private. Tiberius ordered the multitude to make way for him, by which means, though not without some difficulty, Flavius got to him, and informed him that the rich men, in a sitting of the senate, seeing they could not prevail upon the consul to espouse their quarrel,

had come to a final determination amongst themselves that he should be assassinated, and to that purpose had a great number of their friends and servants ready armed to accomplish it. Tiberius no sooner communicated this confederacy to those about him, but they immediately tucked up their gowns, broke the halberts which the officers used to keep the crowd off into pieces, and distributed them among themselves, resolving to resist the attack with these. Those who stood at a distance wondered, and asked what was the occasion; Tiberius, knowing that they could not hear him at that distance, lifted his hand to his head wishing to intimate the great danger which he apprehended himself to be in. His adversaries, taking notice of that action, ran off at once to the senate-house, and declared that Tiberius desired the people to bestow a crown upon him, as if this were the meaning of his touching his head. This news created general confusion in the senators, and Nasica at once called upon the consul to punish this tyrant, and defend the government. The consul mildly replied, that he would not be the first to do any violence; and as he would not suffer any freeman to be put to death, before sentence had lawfully passed upon him, so neither would he allow any measure to be carried into effect, if by persuasion or compulsion on the part of Tiberius the people had been induced to pass an unlawful vote. But Nasica, rising from his seat,

"Since the consul," said he, "regards not the safety of the commonwealth, let every one who will defend the laws, follow me." He then, casting the skirt of his gown over his head, hastened to the capitol; those who bore him company, wrapped their gowns also about their arms, and forced their way after him. And as they were persons of the greatest authority in the city, the common people did not venture to obstruct their passing, but were rather so eager to clear the way for them, that they tumbled over one another in haste. The attendants they brought with them had furnished themselves with clubs and staves from their houses, and they themselves picked up the feet and other fragments of stools and chairs, which were broken by the hasty flight of the common people. Thus armed, they made towards Tiberius, knocking down those whom they found in front of him, and those were soon wholly dispersed and many of them slain. Tiberius tried to save himself by flight. As he was running, he was stopped by one who caught hold of him by the gown; but he threw it off, and fled in his under-garment only. And stumbling over those who before had been knocked down, as he was endeavouring to get up again, Publius Satureius, a tribune, one of his colleagues, was observed to give him the first fatal stroke, by hitting him upon the head with the foot of a stool. The second blow was claimed, as though it had been a deed to be proud of, by

Lucius Rufus. And of the rest there fell above three hundred killed by clubs and staves only, none by an iron weapon.

This, we are told, was the first sedition amongst the Romans, since the abrogation of kingly government, that ended in the effusion of blood. All former quarrels which were neither small nor about trivial matters, were always amicably composed, by mutual concessions on either side, the senate yielding for fear of the commons, and the commons out of respect to the senate. And it is probable indeed that Tiberius himself might then have been easily induced, by mere persuasion, to give way, and certainly, if attacked at all, must have yielded without any recourse to violence and bloodshed, as he had not at that time above three thousand men to support him. But it is evident, that this conspiracy was fomented against him, more out of the hatred and malice which the rich men had to his person, than for the reasons which they commonly pretended against him. In testimony of which we may adduce the cruelty and unnatural insults which they used to his dead body. For they would not suffer his own brother, though he earnestly begged the favour, to bury him in the night, but threw him, together with the other corpses, into the river. Neither did their animosity stop here; for they banished some of his friends without legal process,

and slew as many of the others as they could lay their hands on; amongst whom Diophanes, the orator, was slain, and one Caius Villius cruelly murdered by being shut up in a large tun with vipers and serpents. Blossius of Cuma, indeed, was carried before the consuls, and examined touching what had happened, and freely confessed that he had done, without scruple, whatever Tiberius bade him. "What," cried Nasica, "then if Tiberius had bidden you burn the capitol, would you have burnt it?" His first answer was, that Tiberius never would have ordered any such thing; but being pressed with the same question by several, he declared, "If Tiberius had commanded it, it would have been right for me to do it; for he never would have commanded it, if it had not been for the people's good." Blossius at this time was pardoned, and afterwards went away to Aristonicus in Asia, and when Aristonicus was overthrown and ruined, killed himself.

The senate, to soothe the people after these transactions, did not oppose the division of the public lands, and permitted them to choose another commissioner in the room of Tiberius. So they elected Publius Crassus, who was Gracchus's near connection, as his daughter Licinia was married to Caius Gracchus; although Cornelius Nepos says, that it was not Crassus's daughter whom Caius married, but Brutus's, who

triumphed for his victories over the Lusitanians: but most writers state it as we have done. The people, however, showed evident marks of their anger at Tiberius's death; and were clearly waiting only for the opportunity to be revenged, and Nasica was already threatened with an impeachment. The senate, therefore, fearing lest some mischief should befall him, sent him ambassador into Asia, though there was no occasion for his going thither. For the people did not conceal their indignation even in the open streets, but railed at him, whenever they met him abroad calling him a murderer and a tyrant, one who had polluted the most holy and religious spot in Rome with the blood of a sacred and inviolable magistrate. And so Nasica left Italy, although he was bound, being the chief priest, to officiate in all principal sacrifices. Thus wandering wretchedly and ignominiously from one place to another, he died in a short time after, not far from Pergamus. It is no wonder that the people had such an aversion to Nasica, when even Scipio Africanus, though so much and so deservedly beloved by the Romans, was in danger of quite losing the good opinion which the people had of him, only for repeating, when the news of Tiberius's death was first brought to Numantia, the verse out of Homer-

"Even so perish all who do the same." And afterwards, being asked

by Caius and Fulvius, in a great assembly, what he thought of Tiberius's death, he gave an answer adverse to Tiberius's public actions. Upon which account, the people thenceforth used to interrupt him when he spoke, which, until that time, they had never done, and he, on the other hand, was induced to speak ill of the people. But of this the particulars are given in the life of Scipio.

THE END